

Mr. George Keith's
Farewel Sermon,

PREACHED

At *Turners-Hall*, May the 5th.


With his Two Initiating

SERMONS

Preach'd on *May* the 12th. 1700.

At *St. George's Butolphs-Lane*, by
Billings-Gate.

On *LUKE* the 1st. and Verse 6th.
*And they were both Righteous before GOD, walk-
ing in all the Commandments and Ordinances
of the LORD Blameless.*

 You are to take Notice, this is the Genuine Copy,
and Printed according to *Order*, as it was taken from
the Author's own Mouth.

L O N D O N,
Printed for the AUTHOR; and Sold by most
Booksellers of *London* and *Westminster*, 1700.

Mr. George Keith's SERMON, &c.

LUKE, 1st. Chap. Vers. 6.

And they were both Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Beloved,

YOU have an Account of a Priest, or Teacher, with his Wife, both which being ancient, and as Saint Luke here saith, *Righteous too before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances blameless*; yet for all those gay pretences, the Man was turned Infidel, and did, or at least could not believe the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord; and so in Justice was stricken Dumb, because he did not believe God's Words, which shall be fulfilled in their season, *vers. 20.* Now in taking my leave of my Old and well-Beloved Friends, namely the People called *Quakers*, to which I was once joyned, and made (as *Zacharias* was) a Teacher among them; and (according to their and my weak Opinion) righteous before God, walking in (as they and I thought) all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless, &c. But since growing in Years, so in Knowledge too, being I hope (as *Zacharias* was) better instructed by the blessed Spirit *Gabriel*, which stands in the Presence of God, and so comes from him to bring as glad-tydings to me as it did to *Zacharias*, to strike me for my Infidelity, Dumb; and not able to speak until the time be accomplished, or fulfilled in their Seasons, *vers. 19, 20.* And some People waited for the man *Zacharias*, and marvelled; but when he came out he could not speak to them.

Now you, my dearly Beloved, with whom I now travail in this New Birth, to apply this to my self, and you for

your

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your Edification, you are not insensible that I, and my Spouse, both here, and in *Pensilvania*, were as you; nay, and also as we then thought, righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless: but since it has pleased the Almighty to send to me his blessed Spirit, to shew not only my but your Infidelity also, that we have not been so Righteous as we should have been, as to have had Consciences always void of Offence both towards God and Man; neither have we walked in the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless: And since God Almighty has (as he did to *Zacharias*) been pleased to send his blessed Spirit to discover our Errors, (which I must confess were like to the *Jews* altogether through Ignorance, and so I hope pardonable) and to shew those glad Tydings, viz. what the real Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord are, that we may walk in them and be blameless,

And since for my Infidelity, the All-wise God suffered me to be struck Dumb, till the accomplished Time and Season, which I hope and find is now; for you are not ignorant that those People, before mentioned, which both you and I had, (being then joyned to) had, (and I hope still have) a tenderness for; they I say, for my Infidelity, by God's permission struck me Dumb: So that both in *Pensilvania* and here, I being Anathematized, or Excommunicated by them, became as it were to them Dumb, and Speechless; at which you and some others which waited upon me there, marvelled, as those did at *Zacharias*, vers. 21, 22, 23. thinking and truly supposing that I (as he) had seen a Vision, or Spirit, which made me, as it did him (depart from them) to his, and mine own House; So that it is no Mystery neither to them nor you, that I was obliged to Teach and Instruct privately in Holes and in Corners, as in this little Hall, &c. But thanks be to God, being by the blessed Spirit better instructed in Righteousness in general, and in all the Commands and Ordinances of the Lord, to be without spot or blame; the Time being accomplished, and my Tongue loosed, to speak of the Righteousness towards Man as well as God, and to walk not as you and I have formerly, not only Ignorantly, but Obstinately, and Maliciously in

some (and not in all) of the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord Blameless.

And now having by the aforesaid Spirit, had a Call to the true Church, which I find has a Righteousness to Men as well as God, and walks in and keeps not only some, but all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless, I must humbly and heartily take leave of this private Place, wherein Errors have been both (as I must sincerely confess) ignorantly, and wilfully broached and taught; but I neither shall, nor will take leave of you my *dearly Beloved*, for whom I have been as it were in Bonds, and travailed, and do now travail that both you and I resorting, and fleeing to the true Church as a Sanctuary, may with old *Zacharias*, vers. 68. to the 80th. Bless the Lord God which hath visited and redeemed us his People, by raising up an Horn of Salvation for us, that we should be saved from our Enemies, and from the Hand of all that hate us, to serve him for the future without fear, in *Holiness* and *Righteousness* before Him all the Days of our Lives; for having given a better knowledge of *Salvation* unto us his People, by the *Remission of our Sins*, through the tender *Mercy* of our God, whereby the *Day-spring* from on High hath visited us, to give Light to them (that is others of our Friends that are left behind) that now (as we once did) sit in *Darkness*, and in the shadow of *Death*, and to guide both their and our Feet into the Way of *Peace*.

Thus having explained the Text, by declaring and comparing Old *Zacharias's* Condition with mine own, I come now from the Words so read: *First*, To declare what the True Church is; which may easily be discovered by the Infalible Marks following. *Secondly*, What that Righteousness is, which makes, and will make any blameless. And, *Thirdly*, What the Commandments of God were and are. And *Lastly*, What Ordinances the Lord has appointed in his Church, that all true *Christians* may walk in, and so observe and keep them, so as to be blameless; and then shall make some Inferences, and Applications from, and of what I have said, &c. — True, since amidst the great diversity and contrariety of Opinions, which at present are in the *Christian Church*, each entitling it self to the true Faith, which

which as *St. Jude* saith, *was once delivered to the Saints*; it may seem a matter of extream difficulty, which is the right and true Faith of the Gospel: Yet I must and can assure you, that the difficulty doth not arise so much from the Nature of the thing, as it doth from Men and Womens corrupt Interests and Affections, in disputing about the *Faith*:

Therefore abstracting from these, I shall now *first*, by *God's* assistance, endeavour to set before you the chief *Characters of a True Gospel Faith*, by which you may judge what the *True Church* is, and where it is to be found: Now a *Gospel Faith* is an *Ancient Primitive Faith*; for *Truth* you know was from the beginning; yea, divers of the Doctrines with which our *Saviour* enlightened those that came to him were from the *Moral Law*, before his *Personal Appearance*: for as he well said, *Abraham saw his Day*, (that is) his great Truths and Ways: For our *Blessed Lord* was the Author and Finisher of our Faith, in him it begun, and was consummated in his *Personal Teachings* and *Instructions* of his immediate Disciples and Apostles, who by the unerring guide, *viz.* The Spirit left to us what they had received from him. True, natural Truths are more and more discovered by Time; for many go too and fro, so that Science is increased: But the Divine Truths are most perfect in their Fountain, and Original, they indeed may, and do contract Impurities in their Streams, and remote Derivations. So that the way to discover the *Corruptions*, is to stand upon the old Ways, and see how it was in the Original or Beginning, whether that *Righteousness* which is taught, is to *Man* as well as to *God*: For a good *Conscience* must and should be always void of Offence towards both; and whether their walking is, and has been in all the *Commandments* and *Ordinances* of the Lord or no? if it has but been only in some, and not in all, verily it cannot, nay, must not be accounted blameless. So by this first and true Character of a true *Church*, and *Faith*, two very dangerous Extreames are condemned; as *first*, that of the now *Roman Church*, whose Doctrines and Usages, which are truly denied by that *Church* to which I am now joyned; these following are in comparison, Novelties and Innovations, *viz.* their *Image Worship*, *Innovations of Saints*, *Half Communion*, *Prayer in an unknown Tongue*,

Tongue, their pretended *Infallibility*, and *Universality*, with divers others, &c. which whatsoever they pretend to: I can assure you, many of the Learned Divines of the Church to which I adhere, have proved that all the beforementioned, were generally unknown in the *First*, and *purest Times* and so must be contrary to a *Gospel Faith* and *True Church*. The *Second* on the other Extream is, that *Faith* of the most of the *New Sects* is to be *Condemned*, because of its *Novelty*, and *Innovation*: For where was *Presbytery*, *Independency*, *Anabaptism* and *Quakerism* of *Old*? True, I must confess that there were some such like *Heresies* swimming in the *Brains* of some *Ignorant*, but *Conceited Men* and *Women* then; yet never as we *Read* were they in any general *Practise* any where: For the *Eldest* we *Read* of, were not above *Three Hundred Years* ago; and some have sprung up even in this last *Century* or *Age*; which to my *Sorrow* and *Shame*, I must confess my self to have been of: and to have grown and sprung up even from *Mine*, and others *fickle Fancys*, and *vain Imaginations*: And God knows how soon, now even amongst such, and so many *Confusions*, other new yet unheard of *Sects*, and *Heresies* may arise, and all to the further dividing of the true Church by *Law* *Established*, and the scandal of *Christian Faith* and *Religion*, &c.

True, all These like the *Pharisees*, may profess a great many *Truths* of the *Gospel Faith*, yet for all that, (as their's had) may have too much *Leaven* to spoil the whole *Lump*: But as the true *Faith* was of *Old*, ever from the beginning: So *Secondly*, it was, and is to be both *Pure*, and *Peaceable*; for *St. James* 3. 17. Assures us, that *Wisdom* or *Truth*, which is from above, is first *Pure*, than *Peaceable*, *Gentle*, and *easie* to be *intreated*, full of *Mercy* and good *Fruits*; without *Partiality* and without *Hypocrisie*: teaching and producing *Purity*, *Holiness*, and *Righteousness* in *Life* and *Heart*: For the business of it both was, and is to conform us unto *Christ*, and to make us *Holy* as he was; and that in all manner of our *Conversations*, as *1 Pet.* 2. 15, 16. And not only *Holy*, but *Peaceable* also; for *Christ* was the *Prince* of *Peace*, and his *Gospel* the *Gospel* of *Peace*, and not of *Confusion*, as is manifested, *1 Cor.* 24. from the 33. to the end.

end. For God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace
*As in all Churches of the Saints, let your Women keep Silence
 in the Churches, for it is not permitted them to Speak: but they
 are Commanded to be under Obedience, as also saith the Law,
 &c.* By which second Character of a true Church, there
 are likewise these two aforesaid dangerous Extreame, Con-
 demned and Confuted: The first of which, viz. Popery,
 which apparently teaches not only direct Impieties, and
 Immoralities, by the consequences of its Doctrines; but al-
 so endeavours to Destroy both, Ecclesiastical and Civil
 Peace. For *First*, by their Idolatries, and Invocation of
 Saints and Angels; which by the Prophets and Apostles, is
 termed Spiritual Fornication and Whoredom, by Dishon-
 ouring God's Majesty, and Affronting his Glory: These
 then must undoubtedly be accounted great Impieties; and
 likewise their Doctrines and Practices of Deposing and
 Murthering Princes, by absolving People from their Alle-
 giance, and dispersing with their Perjuries and Rebellions;
 all which are verily high Immortalities, and clear contra-
 ry to the Spirit, and design of the Holy Jesus, which came
 to redeem unto himself a Peculiar People, zealous of good
 Works: Nay, besides these, they even strike at the Root
 and main Design of Christianity, by these following Do-
 ctrines, which renders Repentance, and Change of Life
 unnecessary. For as they think, so are apt to believe, that the
 Favour of God, and Eternal Salvation, may be had upon
 easier Terms; namely, Crosses, Pilgrimages, *Ave Marias*,
 Whipings, &c. Fastings often, with a bare Confession and
 Absolution: They (I say) do not only think, but also
 really believe, that these will do their Business; or if these
 will not, but to *Purgatory* they must go: Yet these suppose,
 and verily believe, that if they can but procure Money enough
 to leave for such a number of *Masses* and *Dirgies*; then
 they shall be secured of being Prayed out thence: So that
 the greatest design of the Gospel, which is real inward Ho-
 linels, is Destroyed by them; for they never so much as
 think of a Necessity of Cutting off right Hands, and pluck-
 ing out Eyes, that is of Subduing, and rescinding all inor-
 dinate Appetites and Affections, which are the great diffi-
 culties of Religion; These they account hard Sayings, and
 cannot

cannot endure either to hear of or practise them: Nay, moved over as for their Unpeaceable Tempers, and Behaviours, both in Spiritual and Temporal, concerns that's Manifested, not only from our own, but Foreign Histories. And the other dangerous Extream is, there are many Sects which Forsooth pretend (as I once did to my Shame be it spoken) to Purity and Spirituality: Saying, *That God sees no Sin in his Saints or Elect, they being without Sin, a Precious and Choice People; yea, affirming, That God loves not for the sake of Holiness and Virtue, but freely (i. e.) for no reason, but meer unaccountable Will.* And if it be so, then it's in vain for any to amend their Lives, or to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly, in order to their acceptance with God: tho' they are contrary in all manner of Conversation; (as may be infer'd from their Doctrine) yet these have been taught, and so fondly think that by being God's Chosen, or Beloved, they shall be saved, which abominable and absurd Doctrine, has not only the Malignity of the worst of Popery, but of Heathenism too; for it makes good Works unnecessary, &c. True, they have a Faith indeed, but it's very Airy, which is only a receiving, trusting, and relying upon Christ by, and in which they do well, being parts of true Faith: But even this the Devils have, and practise, which as St. James 2. 19. 26. tells us, is Dead, and Insignificant alone, to the purpose of Justification, and Acceptance with God.

Nay, Further you know, that the imputed Righteousness of Christ, is a great Truth, rightly understood: But some Sects abuse it to this false Notion, that all the Righteousness which Christ wrought, is formerly and properly theirs, as if they themselves had done it. So they fondly think that by Christ's Holiness, they can, and are made Holy and Righteous, tho' they have none of their own: All which is apparently contrary to that in St. John 3. 9. *Little Children let no Man deceive you: He that doth Righteousness, is Righteous.* So these which I have mentioned, that have such Solifidian and Antinomian Notions, by placing (as I did once) their Religion in the Fancy, as the *Paists* do theirs, in some External Services; do both effectually take away the necessity of a real Reformation, and true Goodness. Nay,

I might add a great many more such as their Doctrines of Infirmities ; by which they are apt to excuse themselves in their Spiritual Sins, and their Decrying Morality, as a dull, low, Graceless Thing ; crying up the Immoral practices of Schisme and Disobedience, which they indulge, and defend themselves in. True, I must confess that there are many misled, abused Persons, of peaceable and quiet Spirits among these Sectaries : So that we as Christians are to pray, and endeavour that such may be regained. And in all Humble submission to my Goverours, If the Grand Council the next Sessions, thinks fit to abate some lesser things in Consideration of such, verily it would (in my weak Judgment in all Christian Countries) be esteemed Charity and Kindness, which I am confident no true Christian either would, or could dislike : But alas, I am not insensible that those which are of the right Sectarian Stamp and Temper, will (as I formerly did) never rest or settle any where, nor be satisfied with any Concession : God Almighty indeed may change their Minds by his Power : But I am afraid nothing less can. So that all, both you, and I, and others of our Church can, and must do, is only to pray to God for the Conversion of such. For we have found, and I have some Reason to think may now find again, as it's feared by woful Experience, that nothing less than the whole Wills of some, and an entire Subjection to their Fancies, have or will content them : for if such were granted all, as they were formerly, we cannot be assured that these would please long ; only this we know, that formerly they did not ; nay, as *St. Jude* in his Epistle, *ver. 12.* saith, such a Whimsical and Discontented People, are as Clouds without Water, carried about with every Wind : For it is certain, that let the Wind be where it will to Day, none can say from what Point it will blow to Morrow ; just thus, as such a People acted by their private Spirit, (as God knows I was once) which is, as observed as little, certain as the Wind ; for (as I have found by woful Experience) the Opinions it suggests, are numerous, and all accounted Divine and Sacred : *viz. Gospel-Truths, Gospel-Ways*, which forsooth, must not be parted with : No, in no wise : Yea, all Laws and Constitutions of Government must be thwarted, and overthrown ra-

ther: *Nay, Love, Peace*, and all must be Sacrificed to the *Idols* of the *Imaginations* of such. Oh! what Blessed *Doings* and *Days* can we expect thence? What *Peace* and *Temper* have sprung from such Principles, the *Histories* of *Germany, England, and Scotland*, make us remember for caution only: So I heartily wish, that no such People in this Age, did or would not remember them so well, as to put them in Practice, which if they do, we have no refuge but to use that daily Petition, and say, *Father not ours, but thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven*. Which brings me to the *Third* and *Last* particular Mark or Sign, to know a true Church by, and that is, that all which it commands, is both Reasonable and Certain, which the Wiseman alludes to *Prov. 20. 27. That the Understanding of Man, is the Candle of the Lord, the Light of Reason is his Light*; with that the true Light hath enlightned every one that cometh into the World: And now one Light should not be contrary to the other: there is, I must confess, a difference in degree, but no opposition of Nature, so Faith and Reason accord: Yea, Faith is an act of Reason, for it's the highest Reason to believe in God, and the belief of our Reason, is an act of Faith, viz. Faith in the Truth and goodness of God, which gives no Man faculties to delude or deceive him: If so be he doth but rightly Exercise and Employ them; yea, by Faith, Reason is further enlightned, and by the use of Reason, Faith is applyed, &c.

So true Religion, and Reason sweetly agree: For nothing can be Religious that is unreasonable, which made the great Apostle call the Christian Religion *a Reasonable Service*; Yea, so certain is the true Faith, that those which had it from the Holy Spirit of God, Signed it with their Blood, these speaking as they were inspired: and that they were really so, was no fond Imagination, or bold Presumption: But a Truth assured by these mighty Miracles they were enabled to perform. These are God's Seal, and a grand Confirmation of a Commission from him, and to that proof of their Doctrines both Christ, and his Apostles continually Appealed. Here was, and is then the firm reasonable Foundation of the Christian certainty: the Truths we are to believe, were confirmed by Miracles, than which there can be

be no greater Evidence by which last Character these two before cited dangerous Extrems, are Dispis'd and Condemned: As *First*, that of *Popery*, which imposeth on the Minds of Men as Articles of Religion, things that are both Extream Unreasonable, Absurd, and Uncertain, viz. These namely, the Worshipping of invisible Beings by Images of Wood, Stone, or some Mettal, &c. but more especially that Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, which is full of Contradictions: Since the asserting that the same Body may be in a Thousand places at once; and that it may be divided into Parts, tho' not into wholes. These and a numerous other Absurdities to the Reason of Mankind, are contained in that senseless Mystery of *Transubstantiation*, to defend which their *Doctors* have been, and are forced to deny Reason; and say that the same thing may, and can be, and not be, &c.

But *Beloved*, if neither Reason, nor so much as our Senses may be believed; Pray what assurance can we have of any thing? But Oh! What assurance had *Peter* to strengthen his staggering Faith about our Saviour's Resurrection? This only, and that particularly from his Lord, viz. *Stretch out thine hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.* Nay, further, the now *Roman Church* destroys the Ground of Certainty, by an innumerable Company of Lying Wonders; which you may Read of in their *Legends*, which the Priests do impudently obtrude upon the belief of the silly and ignorant People only for proof, and confirmation of their Religion. But on the other Hand, the Sects and Separatists being in as dangerous an Extream concerning Faith, &c. For I found, and have now just Reason to acknowledge, that the greatest part of my Religion, when among them, was made up of senseless and absurd Notions, (which I am now ashamed of) they being (as we were wont) set forth in unintelligible fantastical Phrases; by (as 2 *Pet* 3. 16. saith) wresting of Scriptures to our own Destruction: tho' I indeed then, (as well as they) accounted it, the heights of Spirituality and Mystery, upon which we valued and boasted our selves, as the only Knowing and Spiritual People: When as Thanks be to God, it is known now to me, and all discerning Persons that there was, and is nothing in such pretended Heights and Spiritualities, but only vain Imagination and Dreaming; which are dangerous Deceits. For as the Light of Reason and Sense dispels the vain Images of Dreams: So these admitted, would and will cure all Phantastical Impositions and Delusions, for which cause they, as well as I, formerly declared against nothing so vehemently as Reason, under the notion of Carnal, and so an Enemy to the Spirit; and the things of it. True, I must needs confess now, that there is a Carnal Reason which is Enmity to Truth and Goodness: But that (as I am rightly inform'd) is not the Reason of our Minds,

but of our Appetites, Passions, and corrupt Interests; which is not Reason truly and properly so call'd; no more than an *Ape* can be call'd a *Man*: And for want of knowing, and distinguishing the things which so differ. Verily, *Enthusiasticks* rail violently against all Reason, as the grand Adversary of the Truths and Mysteries of the Gospel. Nay, further resolving as I did formerly, all assurance either into, or upon a bare Belief of the Testimony of a private Spirit: For as mine was, so their Ground and Belief of the Scriptures both was, and is this Testimony; and consequently whatsoever is received from hence, bottoms there. The *Papists*, as it's confessed, believed the Scriptures on the Testimony of their Church, but that Sect of which I was with others, believe them on the Testimony of their Spirit: That is in Sober Sadness, and the Suggestions, and Resolutions of their own, *viz.* they (like silly Women led Captive) believe because they will believe, finding themselves inclined to it: So upon the same Reason as has been observed; when the Imagination, and Humour (as mine did) alters, they then may, and will cease to believe; or as I do now believe the contrary: I shall not appeal only to my own Experience, but to that in others also. For have not some vastly multiplied Articles of Faith, by making all their private Opinions sacred, calling them Gospel, and saving Truths; whereas at the best they were but uncertainties: For being senseless Imaginations, they are usually false, by which they expose the whole Body of Christian Principles to Suspicion, and so weaken the Faith of some, and destroy that of others. So now having given you the Characters of a true Church; Namely *First*, that its Articles of Faith and Doctrine are antient, *viz.* as St. Jude saith, *That which was once delivered to the Saints.* *Secondly*, That it's Pure, and Peaceable: And *Thirdly*, That those things it commands, are both reasonable and certain: And since for all the fine and gay Pretences, I cannot find such a Faith in these two dangerous Extreames, which I have fairly and impartially Examined: I will by God's assistance Examine, and see whether that Church, into which I am now entered, being by Law Established, has those Marks and Characters of a true Faith, which I have before described: And *First*, I am well assured, and so dare boldly assert, that the Church Established without fondness, or over-weaning, doth profess, and teach the antient Primitive, and Apostolick Faith, having omitted no new things that are contrary to it: For it was reformed according to the Scriptures, and the Apostolick Rules, and Ways: I say according to the Scriptures, as they were interpreted by the first General Councils and Fathers; those I mean next to the Apostles, whom we ought to believe; for they then assuredly understood what was the Apostles Doctrine, and Ways; nay, the

the Church is truly and rightly called *Protestant*, because it protests both against the *Roman* and *Sectarian* Innovations; so according to the first Character must be true. — *Secondly*, It teaches us Righteousness in general, namely our duty to God, our Neighbours, and our Selves, in the just Latitude and extent of them: For it has no Shifts, and Evasions of Repentance and Reformation; it allows no hopes of Salvation but upon Gospel terms: It teaches no Practise that is either Impious, or Immoral, nor indulgeth any by its Doctrine; perhaps some Rotten Members may wink, and connive at such: For the Church it self tells us that whosoever is Evil, must know it, by being Judged and Condemned: Nay, further, the Church leaves no hopes of Salvation, but is grounded on effectual Repentance, and Reformation; nor imposeth any Articles of belief, as necessary to Salvation, but the antient Creed, and no terms of Communion; but reasonable Orders and Decencies, as are free from all appearance of Idolatry and Superstition, or any thing else that is unlawful; and as to the concerns of civil Peace, the Church with Christ and his Apostles hath taught all active, Chearful and Conscientious Obedience, both to God, the King, and also Subordinate Rulers in all lawful things, and a quiet Submission to the Penalties of not Obeying, when the things required, are plainly or certainly so, to its former Praise, Renown, and Happiness, be it spoken. So *Lastly*, the Church now Established, teaches no Opinions that needs such a desperate Course to defend them: For all its Articles are reasonable, and may be proved, or defended by Reason against all *Atheists* or *Infidels*, &c. She secures also the certainty of her Faith, by resolving it into the Scriptures, the true Seat of Infallibility; and the belief of the Scriptures (on the other hand) into the Testimony of the Spirit of God, which by confirmed Miracles. So that by these Three Characters, of a True and Gospel Faith, the Church to which I am now joined, doth not only profess, but practise it: True, the best Church and Religion may be discredited by its Professors, and that the Established Religion as such, is false, can never be wrested out of the Mouths of those of the Church of *Rome*, and others, which seek and take occasions to Blaspheme it; till such time as the composing our Differences, shall take away that occasion which they have so unhappily given; and we take Apostles advice, to the Epistle of *Phil.* 1. 29. 2d. to stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel, and in nothing terrified by our Adversaries: which to them is an evident token of Perdition, but to us of Salvation, and that of God. I know its possible (some may not only think, but say) that they may maintain Charity, notwithstanding they break Communion with an Established Church: But *Beloved*, give me leave to tell, nay, to assure you that that is next to impossible to be done; for when Men's Differences are about Matters of Religion, then as I know by Experience, Passion is apt to slide under that fair pretext, and lay claim to Conscience it self; so that it becomes a piece of Zeal to be Uncharitable: But give me leave to premise, that it's not sufficient for any Man or Woman's Repose, to say that they are acted by Conscience, is no other than ones present Perdition. Conscience it self then must needs lie at the Mercy of every thing that has Power to perswade it: and hence oftentimes it comes to pass that whilst Conscience acts such it self, (as I, and I don't doubt but many of you have observed) is acted by Passions, and Weaknesses, & then what has must or will become of the Regularity of what some have

have done and do. I am fully perswaded, that every Christian detests the charge of being swayed in Matters of Religion; either by Interest or Partiality, or Pride, or Appetites, or Aversions, or something that is and has been either avowedly Evil, or Shamefully Weak.

But now I shall not rashly charge any with being swaid with such, tho' I have great Reason to suspect that all these before-mentioned, have found ways to pass into some, nay, I may say, into too many Men and Womens Consciences, and there act as securely as behind a Curtain; yea, even at that time when such were and are ready to detest them in their naked Appearances: To confirm which Truth, I will appeal not only to mine own, but some others undeniable Experiences, themselves being Judges; Nay, have none of you here ever heard of, nor known any who out of Wantonness of Wit, and Affectation of Singularity, have made a perfect new Model of *Christian Religion*, by making a *God* without *Eternity*, a *Saviour* without Satisfaction, and a *Hell* without Torments; these forsooth, did first admire their Scheme, and then believed it, and so became Masters of a *Self*; and thus their Vanity passed into *Conscience*. Others there have been, and are of a Morose Temper and Complexion, which falling as it were into dislike with that Sweetness *Christianity* obliges to, and those *Sacraments* and *Ordinances* which are the Tyes of Union, and that *Gospel* that so instantly presses it: These (as I know by former Experience, being one of them) verily have believed that the very *Gospel-Institutions* are but Types and Shadows; and that every Man and Woman has a *surer Word of Prophecy* within Themselves, and that *God* must be served without all positive Commandments or Ordinances, &c. These you (as well as I) know have sprung into a numerous *Self*; and thus *Complexion* and *Humour* have passed, and doth pass into *Conscience*. Others there are which you cannot but have heard of, whose *Covousness* has first inclined them to Teach, and then the Success of their *Doctrine* has tempted them to believe that the Merits of *Humane Piety* may be transferred from Person to Person, and that the Fruits of *Repentance* may be purchased at a Price: So having let their Minds grow Gross and Carnal, and then finding themselves either too much at Loss in their Devotions, to a Pure and Invisible *Being*, have introduced sensible Objects of Worship, and humane Mediators, to whom they might address both with more Boldness and Carelessness: And thus both *Avarice* and *Beastiality* have passed and do pass into *Conscience*.

Others there are, and have been, which being fond of some Opinions, and having no other Foundation to build upon, have (by their Dreams and vain Imaginations) made them Canonical; and being of a temper more Zealous, and Fierce, and having perswaded themselves that all is Sacred that they do for the Advancement of their own Opinions; and so have allowed and practised *Persecutions*, *Murders*, and *Outrages*; And thought (as *Saul*, which afterward was named *Paul*) that in so doing, they did *God* good Service. Thus Fondness and Cruelty have passed into *Conscience*.—Others there are, and have been, which being uneasy in their Worldly Circumstances, and then reflecting upon that *Mysterious Imimation* that *Christ* should some time Reign alone upon Earth, have (as they were willing) believed that that Time was near Accomplished, and thereupon have cried down all *Worldly Government* as *Antichristian*, hoping thereby to set up *King Jesus*, and themselves together; And thus Discontent, has passed into *Conscience*.—But to be brief

brief. Others there have been, and also are, which have been as it were devoted to an Aversion to the Church established, (as I was) even from their Youth, being warned to avoid it, and not to have any particular Communion with it; on the Peril of their Souls, being told (as I was) that it was *Ambrosian*, *Popish*, *Socinian*, or *Pelagian*; being made to believe that it's Monstrous, without ever being suffered to Examine or Understand it; And being thus bred under Masters better skilled in Affirming than Proving, have been also taught, that the most commendable Faith is, that which swallows All Things without any Examination; and that the more Reason one hears against ones Self, the more Meritorious is and will be ones obstinacy. And thus not only Curiosity, but Prejudice also, and Cruelty have passed into Conscience.

Now what can or shall I say more, if both Men and Women's Appetites, Passions, Follies, Prejudices, Fondnesses, Aversions, Wishes and Dreams, both may and have passed into Conscience, and prescribed and governed there, as by these you may understand; and some, I doubt not, here may by undeniable Experience know; Nay, it has been (by many as well as my self) observed that the Matters which these of the *Reformed Church* differ about, are very small; and the Animosities both have been, and are generally the higher, and greater: For to our Shame be it spoken, the smaller the Distance, or Difference, the wider the Breach; insomuch that most can live more Friendly with an *Infidel*, that differs in the object of Worship, than with another *Christian* that differs only in the Form: The Reason whereof, (as I conjecture, and judge) must be this, That when the Opinions of others are at a great distance from our own, then we look upon them as a simple Perswasion; but when they come near to our, we look upon such as a kind of Affront, presuming that where the Distance is so little, it is not so much the Matter of Controversie, as the Malice of the Party that keeps up the Difference: So that is a Prejudice which naturally inflames Men and Women to Revenge, and breeds as we find by woful Experience, even a Canker in Religion, which insensibly eats up the Spirit of it, which caused the Princely Prophet to say, *Psalm 59. 9. The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me.* — But waving all this, to proceed to the Second Particular, namely, What that *Righteousness* is which is made, and will make any Blameless? Now give me leave to suppose, that that Man or Woman which breaks Communion with a true Church which is by Law established, tho' they maintain all other Acts of *Christianity* as much as possible, as to bear no Malice to any, to Censure none, to Pay for, and wish well to all; yet I can and must assure you, that indeed it is to be *Righteous before God*; but yet far short of the Duty in keeping all the *Commandments*, since that Duty of *Brotherly Love*, namely, that Love which one *Christian* owes to another, is not expressed; For *Brotherly Love* is not or at least can't be shown but by Communicating in *Religious Offices*, viz. *Breaking of Bread*, and in *Prayers*, as the Primitive Fellowship of *Christians* is expressed in Holy Scripture; which Offices in all Ages have been looked upon as the necessary Tests and Symbols of *Christian Love* &c.

But alas! alas! Division both is, and has been (as I know by Experience) the Mother of a great many Evils: For what an Harvest was, and is it (as I formerly found) to wily Seducers? and what a Rock to unstable Minds; yea, what a Snare to Itching Ears, and what an opportunity to Men and Women of either wanton or perversh Fancies to sow the Tares of Confusion: And what a Provocation to God to suffer, that they

they who can't agree with one another, should sometimes or other be suffered to be devoured one of another. — But *Lafly*, Some, say, many pretend that their differing, or dissenting from a true and established Church, is because they cannot Edify, as they think, under the Churches Teachers; and that is the chief if not the only Reason, they do, or cannot communicate with her; thinking it almost impossible to edify as much under her Teachers, as they do under those that separate from her. And what the true Reason of non-edifying is, I shall now inquire into; and that being now by me perceived, and to you related, I am afraid will prove a very scandalous Reason; for I find that its nothing but Prejudice that hinders their Edification: Prejudice I say, which would hinder some from Edifying, even under the Labours of an Angel: I am well assured that it hindered many from improving under the Labours of a God, much more then under either some Angels or Men; for without all doubt our blessed Lord was a most edifying Preacher, and yet its evident that a great many of those that heard him were never the better, they were indeed such which spread abroad Ill Characters, and entertained a mean opinion of him, calling him the *Carpenter's Son, a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, with which Prejudice they hindered not only themselves, but also others from edifying.

And to conclude this Second Particular of my Text, give me leave once more to tell all such, which (as I once did) do dissent from the Church, in making such slender, but gay, and plausible Pretences, that if they, as I did once, think or imagine that theirs is the right and true Way. To which I Answer, That that is but bare Thought or Imagination, which they (as I once foolishly did) so eagerly contend for; and that which they now have, and do condemn, are all Positive, and Divine Commands, and Ordinances; nay, were such certain, that the Rules and Ways which they propose were in their judgment, better than those of the established Church, &c. yet they may be as certain that Love and Charity are better than these: And granting that Humane Laws are now dispensable at pleasure; yet I hope that none dare, or will think that the Laws of God (which require an Obedience, not only to some Commandments and Ordinances, but to all to be blameless) are and may be dispensed with by us. True, all Opinions plead Scripture for what they say and do, and many pretend to Reason, and the most to Antiquity: Ages I must confess alters Judgments, and Affections changes the Thoughts and Imaginations, often shift the Scene, and what some calls Reason, has proved oftentimes a change of Phantasms; so that often many are guided by Prejudices, and over-ruled by Authority; or formed as I have known by Education, and so stuck in their Opinions carelessly, or by accident, and are deeply settled before they have examined; yea, when they do examine but by halves; For they seeing & know but few things, judge all the rest by those they know and see; so that such do not either seek the Truth at all, or are unable to manage a due and impartial search of it: Or when they stumble upon it, they do not know; or when it is in their sight, they boggle, and are afraid, and so runs away from it, or else begin to daub it with vile Aspersions, whilst they catch only at Shadows, and grow fond of the Images of their own Fancies, crying up those for Truth and Faith: Thus disturbing Societies, and the Peace of Mankind, to gain Credit to their own fond Dreams and Fancies, being confident of their Opinions, and even hating those which are not of their Persuasion. Thus forsaking a certain Duty for some doubtful and foolish Tenets. If these were but considered by all, Fondness towards Opinion would be lessened, and Charity promoted, which is so necessary among all Christians, which that it may come to pass, God grant for Christ's sake: A M E N.

